

SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

HELP US TO #RENATURE
SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **The four seasons** Find out about our new photo competition and how you could win £100 by taking a breathtaking image of landscape, wildlife, buildings or people.
- **Wellness benefits** Learn more about our new health and wellbeing travel grants that are designed to help more groups from urban areas have access to the National Park.
- **Marvellous museums** Find out about the best venues to learn about Roman history.
- **Competition** Win a guided tour and tasting for two at Hambledon Vineyard!

As always, please send your comments and ideas to us at newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

Get snapping! Annual photo contest returns

The seasons of the South Downs each bring their own unique magic.

The burst of colour as nature springs into life, warm balmy days wandering across sun-kissed hills, cosy autumn walks in vibrantly-coloured forests, and cold, crisp days with incredible afternoon sunsets.

The National Park's ever-popular photo competition returns for 2024 with a new theme of **"Stunning Seasons of the South Downs"**.

People are being asked to submit breathtaking images that capture the true essence of spring, summer, autumn and winter in the National Park.

There will be a **£100 prizewinner for each of the four seasons**, so judges will be looking for a variety of interesting shots that depict the changing conditions and the impact on landscape, nature and people.



For the first time in the competition's history, there will be a **"Towns and Villages"** sub-category with a top prize of £100. Judges will be looking for an amazing image showcasing one of



A bluebell wood in spring

the National Park's many towns, villages and hamlets, such as images of high streets, village squares, public parks, churches, historic buildings or community events such as summer fetes.

As always, the photo competition will feature a non-themed **wildlife** category, with a top prize of £100 for an incredible shot of one, or many, of the beautiful creatures inhabiting the South Downs, as well as a runner-up prize of £50.

The **youth competition** returns this year for budding young photographers – with categories 10 years and under and 11 to 17 and young photographers challenged to snap an amazing seasonal shot of spring, summer, autumn or winter. The prize for 10 years and under will be a family ticket to Marwell Wildlife, while the winner of the 11 to 17 category will win a family ticket to BirdWorld.

More children to benefit from getting outdoors

Returning to judge the competition are award-winning professional photographers Rachael Talibart, Finn Hopson and Carlotta Luke, as well as Claire Blow, deputy editor of *Outdoor Photography* magazine.



Cuckmere Haven on a warm summer's day

Carlotta, who's based in Lewes, said: "I'm very excited about this year's theme! There is so much change to the landscape of the National Park as the seasons progress, giving photographers a lot to focus on. I would love to see some photos that really capture the feeling of a season through its distinctive quality of light, light that changes throughout the year with the angle of the sun.

"I'm very pleased that the competition has expanded to include our lovely National Park towns and villages. There is so much to choose from here, from townscapes and historic architecture to community events. I can't wait to see what comes in."



Claire added: "With so much amazing scenery, National Park is a wonderful place to experience the splendour of each season."

All entries can be submitted to the National Park's easy-to-use portal www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photo-comp/

Submitted images must be taken in the South Downs National Park in the past 10 years. See full terms and conditions [here](#). The deadline for entries is midnight on 31 October 2024.



Hoar frost morning at Didling



Hundreds more schoolchildren will be able to enjoy inspiring school trips to the National Park than in previous years, thanks to an innovative new partnership with National Express Transport Solutions.

The National Park has teamed up with the leading bus and coach hire specialists to offer schools based in southern England discounted coach travel to over 100 attractions and venues in the South Downs National Park.

The days-out can cover all manner of nature and heritage-based activities, such as wildlife surveying, hands-on conservation tasks, going on a country walk or visiting the zoo or a museum.

The partnership has been announced as the National Park's Outdoor Learning Grant is now open for applications from schools across the south east. Teachers are being invited to apply for a grant of between £300 and £500 to cover travel costs, reducing the burden on schools and parents to pay for trips.

The new partnership with National Express Transport Solutions provides affordable, reliable and comfortable school transport at a much reduced rate of £295* during school hours.

It means that the Outdoor Learning Grant will go much further with the National Park being able to support an estimated 70 per cent more schools than in previous years. Schools that are not successful in receiving a grant to cover costs will still be able to use the discounted travel rate from National Express Transport Solutions when visiting the National Park.

Amanda Elmes, Learning, Outreach and Volunteer Lead for the National Park, said: "This is an amazing partnership and will make a huge difference to how many schools we're able to help and how many children can benefit from connecting with the South Downs.

"Learning about the natural world is such an important part of the curriculum."

Apply for a grant [here](#) and find out about discounted coaches [here](#).

Major report is welcomed

We're welcoming a new report by the charity Campaign for National Parks which identifies that much more needs to be done to help wildlife in the UK's National Parks.



Tim Slaney, Chief Executive (Interim) of the National Park Authority, said: "Nature is in crisis and National Parks must be at the heart of raising our national ambitions and delivering a future where nature is thriving rather

than simply surviving

"We welcome the spotlight on nature from the report. The report identifies some of the serious challenges facing National Parks across England and Wales as we look to deliver thriving, nature-rich landscapes, accessible to the public. This includes the need to build relationships in order to work with landowners and farmers; lack of enough, consistent and long-term funding, and weak enforcement by statutory bodies when damaging works or incidents take place.

"That is why we and other National Parks developed Wildlife Delivery Plans and in 2021, we launched our ambitious South Downs ReNature Campaign – 33% of the National Park managed for nature by 2030. The initiative aims to create 13,000 hectares of new habitat and ensure the remaining 67% of the National Park is nature-friendly through improving existing habitats across farms, woods, rivers, towns and villages."

Since launching its ReNature Campaign, the South Downs National Park Authority and Trust have:

- helped to create over 400 hectares of new wildlife habitat (almost 640 football pitches) to help nature flourish.
- 4,312 hectares of existing habitat has been improved for nature - an area bigger than the city of Portsmouth.
- created or restored 14 ponds which provide crucial habitat for so many of our species.
- In the last five years over 60,000 trees have been planted across 114 different sites across the National Park as part of the Trees for the Downs initiative.
- More than 66 hectares (106 football pitches) of wildflower habitat has been created for pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, through the Bee Lines project.
- The Heathland Reunited project has successfully conserved and enhanced 23,825 hectares of rare lowland heath.

Tim Slaney continued: "We know there is still much to be done and we have big plans for the future. We are committed to working in partnership with landowners, local authorities, NGOs, businesses, communities, volunteers and the public to deliver for nature, climate and people and we are currently working on over 368 active nature recovery projects with our partners."

Trek organised to celebrate National Walking Month



A picturesque hike will take place in the South Downs National Park to celebrate National Walking Month.

The National Park has teamed up with community group Muslim Hikers for a guided seven-mile ramble through stunning woodlands, hills, and historic villages in East Hampshire.

The trek, on Sunday, 19 May, will begin and end at Queen Elizabeth Country Park Visitor Centre, Waterlooville, and will be led by professional mountain guides.

Josh Esan, Engagement and Events Officer for the National Park, said: "With the weather warming up and spring in full swing, National Walking Month is a wonderful opportunity to



explore the South Downs and see some of these incredible nature havens. We've chosen a location that is relatively easy to get to, offers some of the best views of country and coast and has plenty of places to stop.

"All have been welcome to this walk, regardless of religious background or ability. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet like-minded hikers and adventurers from across the country and enjoy a scenic social trek as part of a professionally organized event, with qualified mountain guides."

Muslim Hikers is part of the Active Inclusion Network and organises guided walks at locations across the UK.

Haroon Mota, Founder and Director of the Active Inclusion Network, said: "Relationships and partnerships like this are crucial in helping break down barriers to the outdoors and ensuring communities feel more welcome. There is such a huge demand for inclusive community walks like these, and the fact that we already have 150 people booked for this event highlights this need. We hope this will be the first of many projects in this partnership."

The East Hampshire walk follows on from the success of a similar trek at Seven Sisters Country Park, near Eastbourne, earlier this year (*pictured above*).

Tickets have now sold out for this event, but check out the Muslim Hikers [website](#) for upcoming walks.

they can be enjoyed for generations to come.”

Secrets of the Heath will be packed with free activities for all ages, including the opportunity to join a Saxon shield battle, come face-to-face with reptiles, and enjoy wildlife talks. With plenty of historical re-enactments and a medieval camp, it will be an opportunity to discover more about the people who have called heaths home for millennia.



As well as re-enactments and storytelling, visitors to the free annual festival can search for weird and wonderful insects on the heath with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and perfect their birding technique with the RSPB. On the Saturday night there is also the chance to join an expert-led bat walk (subject to weather).

There will be tasty treats and light bites to buy from a variety of food and drink providers across the site over the weekend and dogs on leads are welcome too

Olivia added: “Parking at Hogmoor Inclosure is limited, so you could always leave the car at home and travel by bike or on foot. We will have secure bike parking available on site.”

With Whitehill & Bordon’s rich military heritage, the National Park’s heathlands team have teamed up with Whitehill Town Council and their special event, on Saturday 8, June, which will be held nearby in the town centre to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Look out for military themed performances at The Shed, only a few minutes’ walk from Hogmoor Inclosure.

Parking will also be free of charge at the SHED in both Parade Square and Woodlands car parks GU35 0DJ, just a short walk from the Inclosure with clear signage on the day between the events.

The event will be an opportunity to pick up a free heathland scavenger trail for children and the free mini-guide about the Wealden Heaths, which include four inspiring walks of varying difficulties. The guide will also be available on the [heathland webpage](#).

Some of the ranger-led walks in May are taking place as part of Alton Walking Festival and include wellbeing and nature walks. Find out and book on to a walk [here](#).

People can find out more about Secrets of the Heath by visiting www.southdowns.gov.uk/event/secrets-of-the-heath/

Discover heathlands for Walking Month and beyond



Discover the amazing wonders of a habitat rarer than rainforest this spring as a free family extravaganza, a new colourful guide and a series of walks take place to celebrate heathlands.

Lowland heaths are one of the unique wildlife havens of the South Downs and a national stronghold for the UK’s six native reptile species. They also have a fascinating history going back to Stone Age times.

An action-packed weekend, **Secrets of the Heath**, takes place at Hogmoor Inclosure, Whitehill & Bordon, on **Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 June**, from 11am to 4pm.

And, in the run-up to the festival, the heathlands team will be running a series of guided walks during **National Walking Month** in May, co-inciding with the release of a colourful new guide all about the incredible Wealden Heaths around Petersfield, Liphook, Liss, Grayshott and Whitehill & Bordon.

Olivia French, who leads public engagement around heathlands for the National Park, said: “Lowland heath is extremely rare, only found across parts of the UK and Scandinavia.



“It’s home to a whole host of rare reptile, amphibian, bird and insect species – including some very iconic ones such as the Natterjack toad and sand lizard. It’s a haven for some very special bird species that

nest on the ground in spring and summer – the nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. Much of the heathland in this part of Hampshire is so important for wildlife that it’s protected by law under a Special Protection Area (SPA).

“All these activities across the spring and summer aim to reconnect people to their local heathland habitat and inspire communities to learn more about their heathland, working together to look after them so



Winner of dogwalking photo competition is announced



We're very excited to announce the winner of our #Takethelead #PawsonthePath photo competition that ran through March and April.

This lovely photo by Sam Vidler of a walker enjoying the stunning views of the South Downs with her three dogs was picked by vet Marc Abraham as the worthy winner of the social media competition.

Sussex-based vet, animal welfare campaigner, and South Downs enthusiast Dr Marc Abraham OBE explained: "It wasn't easy to choose but this picture ticks all the boxes – and also tells a story.



"It's never been more important to make sure our four-legged friends are kept under control at all times, which means sticking to the paths during ground-nesting bird and lambing season, as well as picking up their poop and disposing of it safely and responsibly."

A hamper full of doggy treats is on its way to Sam.

Last remaining places for Green Finance Summit!

Are you a landowner, farmer, developer or have an interest in delivering nature recovery through green finance?



This exciting summit will bring together key policy makers, practitioners, landowners and those seeking to invest in green finance or offset, to demonstrate and discuss how unlocking new green finance for nature can deliver more, better, faster, landscape-led nature recovery.

The summit takes place at the South Downs Centre, Midhurst, on **Thursday, 23 May** between 10am and 4pm and you can attend all, or part, of the summit as there will be a series of interesting and informative talks.

Please email eventbookings@southdowns.gov.uk to reserve your place.

New health and wellbeing grants are launched



A new grants scheme has been launched to help more people from urban areas access the National Park for its mental health and wellbeing benefits.

The profound impact of green spaces and being in nature to help manage depression, anxiety, stress and loneliness are becoming better understood as each year goes by.

Now, ahead of **Mental Health Awareness Week** this month, the National Park Authority is launching an initiative to help local community groups make the most of the tranquil and wildlife-rich landscape on their doorstep.

The Health and Wellbeing Travel Grants are particularly aimed at communities on the urban fringes across Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey that may not have had access to the National Park before and might struggle with transport costs.

The initiative is being launched in partnership with Community Transport Sussex, which is able to provide a minibus service to and from the National Park.

Kate Drake (*pictured above*), Health and Wellbeing Officer for the National Park, said: "National Parks are part of the nation's support system for health and wellbeing and research shows that as little as two hours per week outdoors can be beneficial to one's health and quality of life.

"We conducted a study and found that while some people want to access the National Park for its mental health benefits, the issue of transport can be a barrier for some groups.

"These grants aim to overcome this by providing community groups with extra support to cover travel costs so they can come to the South Downs and have a wonderful, uplifting and restoring day-out surrounded by nature. This initiative is part of our widening work around green social prescribing, providing a 'natural health service' to help people dealing with a range of mental and physical issues.

The travel grants are up to the value of £250 to cover transport costs.

Find out more by visiting this [webpage](#).

Explore the region's Roman past by visiting museums



Ancient mosaics at Bignor Roman Villa



For International Museums Day this month, Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the National Park, shines a light on some of the best museums in the area that explore this region's Roman past.

I started working in museums at the age of 21, when I volunteered at the British Museum and radiated pure enthusiasm. Museums have been a thread throughout my career since.

My particular spark of interest in museums started as a result of studying Roman visual art.

On International Museums Day, rather selfishly given my own interests, I thought I would highlight some places in and around the South Downs National Park that provide insights into the Roman world, and particularly how it manifested in the Downs.

The Novium Museum



Boasting archaeological discoveries from across Chichester District, the museum not only holds survivals from the precursor to Chichester today –

for the Romans, known as *Noviomagus Reginorum* – but from across the downland landscape. Here you can see a 4th century AD mosaic floor from Chilgrove (created by a group of highly skilled craftsmen, not adverse to cutting a few corners, in this case laying this beautiful floor on to a poor base of only a few inches of dirty mortar, but hey, it looked good); the fragmented lower half of a small statue

of the goddess Fortuna also from Chilgrove, identified by the rudder and globe beside her leg, symbolic of chance and fate; and the remains of a bronze right arm from a Roman statue, discovered in the vicinity of Halnaker, which may have been part of a statue of a god or member of the imperial family, broken down for scrap, to discredit or for ritual reasons.



Visit the Novium Museum:

<https://www.thenovium.org.uk/>

Open Tuesdays – Saturdays. Entry is free.

Chichester Roman Week runs from 27 May – 1 June. Find events here:

<https://www.thenovium.org.uk/romanweek>

Fishbourne Roman Palace

Fishbourne Roman Palace is outstanding – the earliest and largest surviving Roman residence north of the Alps, not only was it a building on a monumental scale, a mark of the Roman arrival, but it communicated key messages, including Rome's ability to dominate nature and its resources, and thereby magnifying their own power.

More recent research made possible thanks to the archiving of finds from the excavations of the site have revealed more about the Romans and their role in species introduction to Britain – Fishbourne's gardens were populated with then exotic species, such as semi-domesticated fallow deer (later to die out only to be reintroduced by around 1000AD) and the first rabbits in Britain, demonstrating that although the Romans did much for us today (roads, heating, aqueducts), ecosystem imbalance sits on the flip side.... Visit for the splendour of the mosaics and objects such as a partial fragment of a Roman portrait of a boy, now thought to be the Emperor Nero in childhood; get engrossed in the stories of Roman toilet paper and chickens!

Visit Fishbourne Roman Palace: [Fishbourne Roman Palace & Gardens - Sussex Past](https://www.sussexpast.co.uk/product/fishbourne-roman-palace-guidebook-written-by-miles-russell-fsa/)

Open 7 days a week, April – October. Entry charges apply.

Check out their hot off the press guidebook by Dr. Miles Russell: <https://sussexpast.co.uk/product/fishbourne-roman-palace-guidebook-written-by-miles-russell-fsa/>

Worthing Museum and Art Gallery

Worthing Museum's archaeology collections are extensive and rich, with highlight material from the Roman period. This includes the Patching Hoard, dated to the late 460s AD, and therefore enhancing our understanding of Britain after the much-cited 'letter' of the Emperor Honorius dated to around AD410, which told the island to "look to their own defence" as the beleaguered emperor had prioritise elsewhere. Other highlights include Roman objects from Chanctonbury Ring, which was utilised as a

Win a guided vineyard tour!



With its sun-soaked slopes and chalky soils reminiscent of northern France, the South Downs has made a name for itself for producing some of the best English sparkling wines.

One of the oldest and most successful vineyards is nestled in the quaint Hampshire village of Hambledon, "The Cradle of Cricket".

The vineyard has a fascinating history. During the summer of 1951 Major General Sir Guy Salisbury-Jones was looking out of the dining room window of Mill Down House with his stepson John thinking about what to do with the field directly below them. As Sir Guy was a keen wine lover and Francophile, having spent time as a diplomat in Paris, John suggested he might consider planting a vineyard.

Sir Guy began researching the feasibility of planting vines on the south-facing slopes and, after careful deliberation, and with the help and advice from friends at the renowned Champagne House Pol Roger, he planted a number of different grape varieties in 1952 and went on to release the first commercial range of English wines.

Fast forward to the early 2000s and, following a few quieter years amid a change of ownership, the vineyard underwent a resurrection to become bigger and better than ever. A pivotal decision to focus on sparkling wines led to the planting of a 10-acre trial vineyard with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier.



Today, Hambledon Vineyard boasts over 200 acres of vineyards and the UK's only gravity-fed, state-of-the-art winery.

We've teamed up with the vineyard to offer a guided tour and tasting for two people.

People signing up to the newsletter during May will be automatically entered into the draw. Those who are already signed up can email "sparkling" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 31 May.

Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).

religious site from the mid 1st century AD, and beautiful objects from Muntham Court, including a 3rd century AD mouthpiece from a musical instrument.

Visit Worthing Museum: <https://wtm.uk/museum/>

Open Wednesday to Sunday

Bignor Roman Villa



Dating from the 1st to the 4th century AD and within that undergoing a number of development phases, the Roman villa at Bignor encapsulates a story very resonant to us

today – farming, sustainable supply chains and adaptation to new business opportunities. Exploiting landscape resources, including downland grazing and its proximity to Stane Street (which linked Chichester to London), Bignor thrived and its humble origins soon boasted luxurious accommodation, including high quality mosaics floors, with one, featuring the myth of Jupiter (in the guise of an eagle) kidnapping Ganymede, a myth with origins well before the 8th century BC given Homer records the story in his *Iliad*. It is a story whose young hero came from what is now modern Turkey, translated through the classical ancient Mediterranean, replicated here in the Sussex downland.

Visit Bignor Roman Villa: [Planning your visit | Romanvilla | Bignor \(bignorromanvilla.co.uk\)](#)

Open Wednesday – Sunday, April – October (open every day in August).

Entry charges apply.

Winchester City Museum

Discover more about *Venta Belgarum* – known today as Winchester – through a wealth of Roman objects, including the so-called Silkstead Head, a small bronze head of a girl from the first or early second century AD. By the 3rd century, Venta Belgarum was the fifth largest city in Roman Britain, and much like Chichester, was surrounded by an agriculturally rich landscape that gave rise to the 'villa-economies' – not just countryside retreats for the wealthy, but functional landed estates where family wealth grew from exports and supply chains – with examples discovered at Rowlands Castle, Holt Down, Stroud, and Chalton. Splendid among the villas of Hampshire, sitting just outside the National Park, Winchester City Museum also boasts beautiful mosaic and fragmented painted wall plaster from Sparsholt Roman Villa.

Visit Winchester City Museum: [City Museum, Winchester | Historic Winchester](#)

Entry charges apply.

Enjoy your museum visit! 😊

Things to do in the South Downs this May

Please follow the links as booking may be necessary. Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at

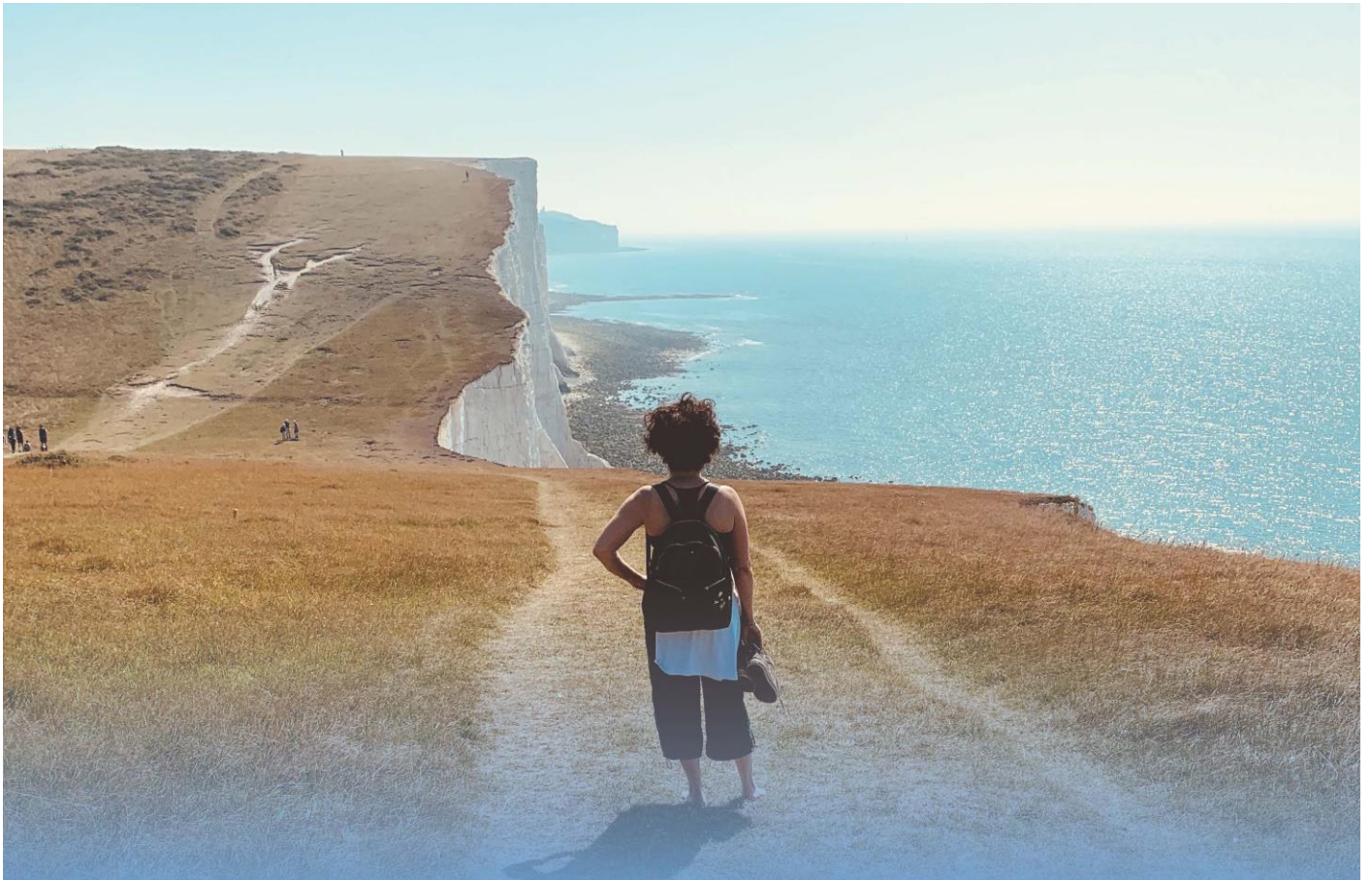
southdowns.gov.uk/events/



- Learn about the amazing world of moths [at Gilbert White's House and Gardens](#), in Selborne. The museum is resuming its moth nights over the summer with opportunities to see a variety of moths. All are welcome to join from around dusk on 11 May to see how the moth lights are set up and experience the first visitors of the night to the lights.
- [Charleston Festival](#) begins on 16 May, bringing together today's most exciting artists, thinkers and changemakers to engage with art and ideas. Over two weeks, the festival invites visitors to imagine the world differently through a rich programme of over 60 talks, workshops and performances featuring 150 speakers. Located in the idyllic grounds of Charleston, the festival takes the progressive spirit of the Bloomsbury group as a starting point.
- Join WWF's Great Wild Walk at [Alice Holt Forest](#), near Farnham, on 19 May. The forests you walk, talk and relax in are under threat from climate change. Walk 5 or 10 miles and raise funds to save the places you love.
- On 18 and 19 May visitors to [Amberley Museum](#) will be able to 'turn back time' to the 1940s and experience a wonderful nostalgic atmosphere in Home Front Weekend. Home Front Weekend is a captivating journey through history, offering a unique glimpse into life on the home front during one of the most significant periods in British history. From the iconic wartime fashion to the innovative technologies of the era, visitors will be immersed in the spirit of resilience, courage, and community that defined the wartime experience.
- Join the ["Polo Picnic and a Pint Brewery Walk"](#) on 25 May. Savour the local views on a beautiful eight-mile walk around the Cowdray Estate, in Midhurst, before raising a glass of Langham's back at the brewery.
- Find out more about why the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve is called "Moore's Reserve". [An illustrated talk](#) will be delivered on 28 May by Dr John Mason, Principal Lecturer at the South Downs Planetarium in Chichester and friend of Sir Patrick for over 40 years. This highly personal talk will look at the legacy of Sir Patrick's work, the advent of the BBC's Sky at Night and the Moon landings, as well as the future of further Moon exploration.

Pic credits

P1 Bluebells – Emma Varley; P2 Hoar frost – Martin Offer; P3 right Bip Mistry; P4 right Anne Purkiss.



GO FOR A WALK AND WIN £30!

Have you tried our immersive We Hear You Now audio tour? During April and May, we're inviting you to go for a walk at Seven Sisters and visit three of the 15 listening posts, where you will hear thought-provoking stories and personal reflections about the Sussex Heritage Coast.

Share your thoughts about the experience, what you learned and any other feedback for a chance to win a £30 voucher to spend at the Visitor Centre.

To enter, send a photo of yourself at a listening post, and between 75 and 300 words about your experience, to eventbookings@southdowns.gov.uk.

Look out for these plaques on your walk!



Scan to find out more about We Hear You Now, devised by former Seven Sisters Writer in Residence Alinah Azadeh.

SEVEN SISTERS
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK